

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

Soviet Offer to Supply India Fuel for Tarapur []

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The Soviet Union has on several occasions indicated that it might be willing to supply low enriched uranium for Tarapur if the United States cuts off shipment. India has not pursued the matter. Precise Soviet motives for making this offer are unclear but Moscow probably hopes to create the impression that it is a more reliable nuclear supplier than the United States. In any case, any Soviet decision on Tarapur fuel will be taken within the broader context of Soviet-Indian and Soviet-Third World relations. []

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Since early 1978, the competitive dimension of the US-Soviet interaction in the nonproliferation field has assumed increasing salience. The USSR is sensitive about becoming too closely associated--in the eyes of the developing nations--with the industrialized and nuclear "West." Moreover, Moscow suspects that the United States might actually condone the acquisition of nuclear weapons by certain states in order to safeguard US regional interests. The Indian case offers the USSR an opportunity to exploit the dilemmas faced by US nonproliferation policymakers in South Asia on a relatively peaceful level, while at the same time improving its image as a nuclear supplier to the developing nations.

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Additionally, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union has been seeking areas in which it can mend its fences with the developing world in general and with India in particular. Without dropping its basic opposition to nuclear proliferation, Moscow has recently sought to appear as a more willing and reliable supplier than the United States of nuclear materials for peaceful applications in the Third World. Increased involvement in the Indian nuclear program would be particularly attractive to the Soviet Union for a variety of reasons. Among these would be the opportunity to provide a political counterweight to what Moscow views as US encouragement of Pakistan's nuclear program.

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